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Oct./Nov. '82



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oct./nov.

The International Voice of N.J.'s New Music

vol. 1 no. 5

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"BABOON DOOLEY: ROCK CRITIC"
by John Crawford



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

To the Rocking Gyros, the Cucumbers, and Wind At Night, Pat Clarke & Tramps, Guest DJ Jack Rabid, and to Lee and Gary, for just being there when I really needed to see them; to everybody at the Jersey Beat Benefit:

THANK YOU.

- The Management

editorial:

HIT... OR MISS!

DESPITE THE RELEASE this month of Catholic Girls, the first major-label lp to issue from the Jersey new-wave scene, the state's record for producing hit records has been brutally disappointing.

The Bongos' Drums Along The Hudson, which a lot of us had secretly (and not-so-secretly) hoped would follow the GoGos right up the pop charts, hasn't charted at all; and while RCA has nibbled at Hoboken's fab foursome, the label failed to bite, leaving the boys on PVC.

Meanwhile, dB's Chris Stamey and Peter Holsapple both unveiled solo acts in September, as did Individual Glenn Morrow (who teamed with Holsapple in a band called Rage To Live; the two are also writing together). dB Gene Holder has been sitting in with the Raybeats and dB Will Rigby has been playing a lot of softball. While no one is saying that the dBs and Individuals are officially breaking up, it's clear that all these fine musicians are growing antsy about their careers; the dB's Bearsville deal has been up in the air for months, and the Individuals have awakened to the fact that they'll not become stars signed to Plexus.

There's no simple answer as to why so many California bands - X, the Blasters, Black Flag, and most especially, the GoGo's - seem to be capturing America's ears, while New York and New Jersey's best languish on the local club circuit, cult favorites at best. One explanation may be that Californian fans support their local bands at the clubs and record stores, while too many NY/NJ new-wavers slobber over trendy British imports and yes, those selfsame El Lay groups, while ignoring their hometown heroes.

Part of the blame must go to local radio. Even the college stations, on the basis of the playlists which routinely come in our mail, only want to broadcast British synth-rock dance bands (what Howard Wuelfing calls "Jackboot Disco"), El Lay Hardcore, and the big hits. WNEW and WLIR do a better than average job of getting new bands on the air, and I've become convinced that the "Prisoners Of Rock N Roll" is an invaluable addition to the local rock scene - if such a thing still exists at all.

This issue of Jersey Beat is filled with record reviews, a record store guide, a radio guide... C'mon, what more do you need? Start listening, start buying; put your money where your ears are. Or plan to spend the '80's listening to foreigners; or worse yet, Foreigner.



NOTE: HE could have been kidding...

THE



BEAT

DEADLINE BLUES: Imminent, but alas too late for this issue of J/B, are several major releases from the Jersey scene...Let's start with the Dirt Compilation Album, Volume I, featuring a wide world of wavey sounds from the area, compiled and supervised by John Schroder of the Dirt Club; an October release is promised and this should really make a splash in terms of getting the Jersey scene heard 'round the country...Also due in October sometime are two initial releases from Steve Fallon's Coyote Record label, which will help bring the Maxwells musical mafia to the outside world: Expect Steve Almaas' four-song e.p. and then the Phosphenes' debut e.p. here...Almaas' e.p. has already been heard on the airwaves, since "What's The Matter?" was a WNEW Prisoner of Rock N Roll selection a while back; the Phosphenes' record has been described as very noisy, very metalloid; or in the words of Phosphenes lead singer Tim Sherry, "It really sucks, it's great!"

As we go to press, the Bongos' tentative deal with RCA is still no-go, leaving them signed to PVC/Jem, while the dBs long-discussed Bearsville deal remains similarly moot...The big surprise is the release of the Catholic Girls' debut lp on MCA, the first major-label release from a Jersey-based new-wave band! Longtime Jersey scenemakers may remember the girls from the days when they called themselves Double Cross and released an indie single, "Private School"/"Where Did I Go Wrong" - both songs appear in new arrangements on the lp, by the way...Expect a club tour soon, including at least one unannounced gig at a major NYC club without the trademark Catholic girlschool uniforms...Meanwhile club faves the Whyos will be keeping a low profile for a while as they take some time off to write new songs and record...

GET A JOB: Sha na na na, and all that...Anna Cerami, late of the Aquarian, happily reports that her projected fanzine, COOL METRO, is "on the back burner" for the best of reasons - Anna's busy with her new job as managing editor of both HIT PARADER and ROCK N SOUL magazines (try to keep Ted Nugent off the cover of HP for at least one month, okay, Anna?)...HP is also where you'll find Everynight Charley Crespo, now that he's no longer at the Aquarian; Crespo also has a book deal to do Volume 3 of Norm N. Nite's rockcyclopedia, he reports...

MORE RECORD NEWS: Adrenalin O.D. - at the Hardcore bash of the fall season October 22 with Kraut, the new Even Worse, and teenypunks The Young & The Useless--plan an ep for Xmas; tentative title, "Let's Barbecue With AOD"...Also look for a six-song cassette-only release from the Pleasure Hounds, the first act to be signed by Pressure Sounds Records, a new Jersey-based concern; Hound Kevin Kelly promises more signings by the label soon... Broccoli-Rabe Records of North Haledon has signed Sting - not the Police bassist but the Jersey band of that name; an lp is on the way...



Catholic Girls

by Jim Testa

The Catholic Girls weren't created by some technocratic Merlin hours after "Our Lips Are Sealed" hit No. 1 on the charts. Oh no. Two and three years ago, on the then-torturous "Dirt Club Circuit" in NJ's Essex County, the Catholic Girls were dressing up in their girls school uniforms (a gimmick I suspect they may soon outgrow) and making the rounds, playing whatever little hole in the wall would support original local bands in those days. These gals aren't GoGo clones; in fact, we are talking definitive bicoastal polarity here: The Catholic Girls are everything East Coast to the Go Go's West Coast. Where the Go Go's cheery pap-pop rock panders overripe Valley Girl sleaze to granola-sated

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE



cretins, the Catholic Girls are all high-cheekboned angularity with razorblade eyes. Kathy Valentine and Belinda Carlisle may have the beat, but CG Gail Petersen has more: Better songs, a more distinctive voice, a greater sense of herself in her lyrics; talent, and style.

Catholic Girls, the band's debut lp on MCA Records, offers a range of styles; something for everyone, without being blatantly "commercial" about it. For Go Go's fans there are, indeed, new-wavey dancefloor cheers - "You Let Me Down," "Boys Can Cry;" and the stunning opener, "Someone New," that's as close to a bona fide pick-hit single as I've heard in a long time.

But Petersen, lead vocalist, guitarist, and songwriter for the band, goes for more than gossipy girl talk and witless rah-rah's in her songs. There's the campy melodrama of "Private School" (what a chorus: "Private school/Oh God no!") and the Spector-ish teenage lament, "I Called You Up." And the catholicism that runs through the lp is tangible, relevant, not at all gimmicky, telling a tale of sex with guilt, of post-adolescence as a rite of passage as trying as Holy Orders.

The gaily bouncing melody of "Someone New," for instance, conceals a bitterness that's chilling, as the narrator finds herself being dumped for the sake of sexual novelty. And then there's the analagous female point of view - single girl as bar-hopping shark - presented in "A Boy For Me:" "Last summer I had 23/Didn't do a thing for me/Waking up and feeling bored/Making love is such a chore..." Still wanna compare these girls to the Go Go's?

Finally there's the rest of the band. A note of condescension always seems to accompany any review of an all-female rock band - they play real good, for girls, is the way it usually goes. The Catholic Girls play real good, period, especially the syncopated rhythm section of Joanne Holland on bass and Dorren Holmes on drums. What else to say?

They've got the beat.

Catholic Girls put out!

3 SINGLES

"The Reason I Rock"/"My Nature"
Jiggs & The Pigs
Force Records/New Brunswick, NJ

New Brunswick's goofy garage band wastes an A-Side with a trashrock original that strains to recapture the "hot" sound of Gary U.S. Bonds' "Quarter To Three." The B-Side's a bit better, managing to at least get a handle on the loose, easy feel of the party record that this was obviously meant to be. Very Blotto-esque, if you like that kind of thing. I do, but be warned; this is one sloppy piece of vinyl. And "Sherry Baby" it ain't.

- J.T.

"3 Songs"
Hypnotics
Hip-No-Disk Records
3 Thompson St. Raritan, NJ 08869

Droning, tuneles, (okay, I give) "hypnotic" music on this e.p. from an unheard-of trio from Raritan. "Nice" on Side 1 and "Try" on Side 2 offer little more than a nice try at trancey art-rock. Side 2's "A Season We Can Love" at least has the virtue of a little passion in the vocal delivery.

- J.T.

"Are You There"/"Baby You're A Rich Man"
Groceries
RD3 Records

The Wednesday night house band at Trenton's City Gardens, the Groceries are a Jersey scene staple, but this 45 is a little stale. "Are You There" wants to be challenging and arty but lacks the punch to be arrestingly new-ish. The B-side butchers a Beatles song, which ought to be against the law. No beat and you can't dance to it. Back to the garage...uh, supermarket...

- J.T.

REVIEWS

MAXWELL'S
1039 Washington St.
Hoboken 656-9632

REVIEWS

The VINYL PILE

by Pattie Kleinke

Cucumbers-"My Boyfriend"/State Of Desire-"Fascination"/The Mask-"Int'l Music"/The Singing Plumbers-"I'm Losing My Marbles"

Ferro-Botanica Magazine Bonus E.P.
Hoboken, NJ

My only quibble with this 4-song e.p. is the poor quality of the recording. These 4 promising bands, all from NJ, sound like they were recorded on a portable SONY from under a rock. The diversity of musical styles may not be for everyone; but it is a good sampling of how varied the "Jersey Sound" really is. I found this record a lot of fun to listen to, and it supports a good cause. Buy a copy.

The Cucumbers are a quartet from Hoboken (partly), but I don't feel "My Boyfriend" shows them at their best. It's a cute pop song with a Fiftiesish instrumental backing, reminiscent of the harmonies of the Jamies or the Exciters. It's a fun tune, with a giggly sexy feel to it, but it could have been better; less sparse, more tuney.

State of Desire (now, alas, disbanded) has a real neat dance track in "Fascination," with appropriate



JON & DEENA of the CUCUMBERS

ferro-botanica ep

electronic noises to go with the lyrics, all about video games and TV. It's my fave of the lot. "International Music" by the Mask, featuring Alan Houghton (formerly of the Cucumbers), is truly international, combining ska and Latin rhythms in a very contagious song. It's the type of thing I could dance to all night. A little short on the verbal side, maybe (the lyrics consist of little more than the title repeated over and over); and that may bother some people. But I'm interested in hearing more from The Mask before passing judgment on the songwriters. Finally we come to the novelty song of the e.p., "I'm Losing My Marbles," featuring Hoboken's Gene The Singing Plumber. The song is mock country: Johnny Cash on some funny illegal substance. I love it! The idea, however, is more successful than the actual song, which loses something after repeated listenings.

So pluck down your \$\$, put on your dancing shoes, slap this little record on your turntable, and shake off some of that baby fat to four of NJ's best up-and-coming (and in the case of State Of Desire, up-and-went) bands.



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Ferro-Botanica Magazine will be available in early November and include the above e.p. as a special bonus. It can be ordered by mail for \$3 from D. Musica Productions, 20 Willow Terr. Hoboken, NJ 07030; or it is available in bookstores in Hoboken and in Manhattan.



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by Jim Testa

UXB
Beat'n Path Cafe
Hoboken, NJ 9/11/82

Beatlesque, psychedelic, tuneful, post-punk pop: It's a formula that's heard a lot in Jersey. Few bands do it as well as UXB, a powerpop trio from the Hudson/Bergen County area that's kept its repertoire of potential pick-hits under wraps for too long.

Ernie Mendillo on bass, Alan Katz on drums, and Ed Rupprecht on guitar comprise UXB, with Mendillo handling most of the songwriting chores and all three trading off on lead and backup vocals.



The 45-minute set that UXB ran through in the cozy, newly refurbished backroom of Hoboken's "other" new-wave club, the Beat'n Path Cafe, contained as many charmed surprises as any lineup of original tunes I've heard all year...and it's been a banner season! Start with "You Don't Let Me In," a rush of pop energy and emotion that's going to make a killer single really soon, if there's any justice left in the pop world.

The band handles a variety of styles and sounds with fluid grace - and with more depth than the similar Marshall Crenshaw trio, I'll have you know, from the Clashy "Fight Back" to the neo-psychedelia of "Better Things To Do," to "Going Really Fast," a homage to the Byrds (or is it the Turtles?) featuring Rupprecht's treble guitar hitting chiming folk-rock chords over a bubblegum gem of a melody.

The Beat'n Path Cafe, about 10 blocks down Washington Street from Maxwell's (and practically next door to that teenybopper dive, Rosebud's), has a quasi-hippie menu, 75¢ draft beers, and a backroom with a good p.a., soundbooth, lighting; the works. Pop on Wednesday, poetry on Thursdays, swing and dance music on Fridays, reggae on Saturdays, and comedy on Mondays.

new brunswick report

BEATS, TURKS, BRICKS: A SCENE!

by Jim Testa

NEW BRUNSWICK (Sept. 16) - This quiet college town has been bursting with new-music for a year or more, and an outdoor veter registration rally on the Rutgers College campus here today provided a look and listen at a wide-ranging sampling of it.

The Heartbeats are a pleasing combo that fits the Jersey Pop Band model to a T - upbeat, chipper, tuneful rocksongs delivered by earnest, slender post-adolescents in narrow-lapeled sportscoats and striped shirts. The band has a few legitimate get-up-'n-dance showstoppers but most of the songwriting runs to new-wave cliches; the Heartbeats make snappy, pleasing music but they don't seem to be doing much more than recycling the ideas that seemed fresh four and five years ago, when the post-punk powerpoppers (Scruffs, Shoes, Real Kids, Marbles, etc.) were putting an edge on pop music again.

The Young Turks - not the Red Stewart clone band - are that bona fide rarity, a Jersey-based Art Band. Poetry and dissonant techno-rock vie for equal time in the Young Turks' set, with poet/songwriter/singer/guitarist Billy Snow out front, muttering and growling his way through an array of tuneless, cheerless threnodies. The band's single, "I'm Unsteppable"/"Baby Doll"/"Minute In The Sun," suggests a more melodic sound, something like an arty T-Rex; but on stage, the Turks' set seems aggressively sember. Songs are occasionally interrupted by an on-stage poet, who recites free verse. In the year that Alan Ginsberg toured with the Clash, this might actually have potential. But part of Art Rock's modus operandi is a forceful anti-charisma, which Billy Snow captures all too well. Ginsberg, crackpot pinkie rattlebrained beatnik that he is, is much too lovable to be put in the same category as arch, overblown Artists like Snow or that Lower East Side doom 'n gloom crowd. I'm beginning to think an Art Band is any group that performs without consideration of whether the audience is having a good time, while a Pop Band simply retains the old show-biz ethic of performance-as-entertainment. The Young Turks didn't impress me with either their poetry or music, but then many of the Lower East Side art bands I despise have rabid critical supporters, so judge for yourself. And the Turks do win high points for being different.

The Rockin' Bricks are the elder statesmen of the New Brunswick scene, Jersey Club-Rock personified; file them in the same niche as Helme, the Metros, the Watch, etc. From the shag haircuts to the heavy dose of covers in the set, the Bricks live up to the Club Rock image; but to their credit they do put on a whale of a show, with lots of stage presence from guitarist Pete Tomlinson & Co. Somebody once described Springsteen and his E Streeters as the world's greatest frat band. Why blame the Rockin' Bricks if they aspire to no loftier artistic goal themselves? I can't imagine spending a night at a club where these guys are performing and not having a good time. There might be higher praise for a pop-rock band, but few kudos that are more meaningful in terms of consumer dollars or Saturday nights well spent.

The club scene in New Brunswick, apart from the Rutgers frats and student centers, centers around the Court Tavern (Church St. just off George St.) and Doll's Place. Cheap Thrills on George St. is a terrific record store, with a good new-wave selection and an unmatched cut-out section. Flamin' Groovies is another good record shop with some unusual t-shirts and a sizable magazine/fanzine rack.

Record Stores

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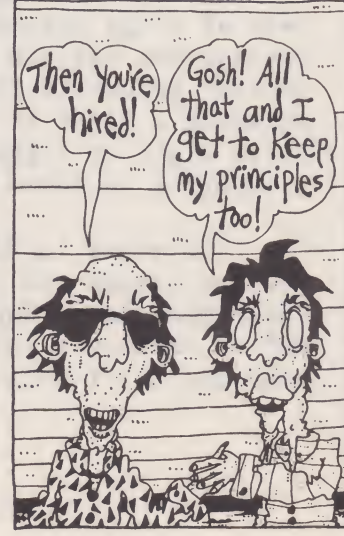
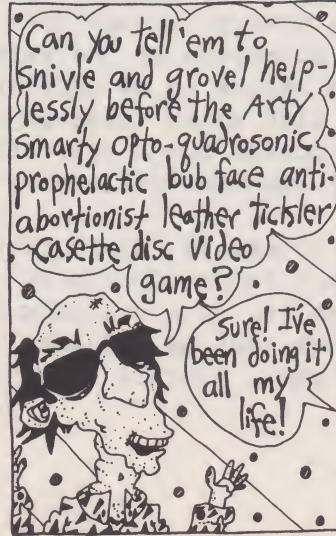
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SMITHEREENS: Surfabilly a' go go

by Pattie Kleinke

If all it took to get ahead was enthusiasm, talent, and good songs, the Smithereens would be #1 with a bullet. But catchy songs and hard work too often take a backseat to gimmickry, according to Pat DiNizio, the talented, hard-working lead singer of the Smithereens.

The Smithereens, veterans of 2½ years on the Jersey scene, hail from the Carteret/New Brunswick area. Besides DiNizio, the band includes Jim Babjak, 24, on guitar and drummer Dennis Diken, 25, who own the Flamin' Groovies record shop in New Brunswick, and Mike Mesaras, 24, on bass. The band's influences range from the Beach Boys to the Kinks to original rockabilly to newish sounds like the Jam and the Stranglers.

Their own sound, according to DiNizio, is straight-ahead rock n roll with a '60's twang; some call it surfabilly, and Dirt Club audiences especially have come to enjoy the Smithereens as frequent co-stars with such top-billed acts as the rockabilly Whyos and surfrock's Ventures. The band has played all the clubs on the NJ circuit, from Hitsville to the Stone Pony, but DiNizio has a special place in his sentiments for the Dirt, where the 'reens got their start.

"Johnny Dirt," says DiNizio, has a heart of gold and is the only area clubowner who will give new bands a break."

radio

radio

WFMU (Seton Hall) Paul Cavanaugh Show 1-6 p.m. Mondays. Mostly hardcore. Gabba gabba. Also catch John Naroucki's primetime concerts & live interviews.91.1

WBAI Anarchy In The Afternoon. On erratically but lots of new talent.

WEDU (Fairleigh Dickinson) Gary Williams and Jim Riecken are deejays of note.89.1 FM

WMSC (Montclair State) 90.3 FM Alternative programming, sometimes.

WRSU (Rutgers U.) 88.7 FM

All these stations have weak signals. Twiddle with your tuner till you find one.

It's the same old story, though, when the Smithereens try to find a niche in the rest of the state's rock scene. DiNizio claims that there's very little support for original bands from either the clubs or the fans. Part of the problem comes from the lack of good original bands in the area; too many Jersey groups, says DiNizio, are young suburban kids on a lark, with no motivation for developing any depth or new ideas. British bands, on the other hand, says DiNizio, come from poorer backgrounds, have better ideas, and are packaged better. (Editor's Note: The opinions contained herein are definitely not those of the management.)

The Smithereens' "Got Me A Girl" is on the Dirt Compilation Album, and the band is currently recording an e.p. with ex-Dictator Adny Shernoff producing. The band has already been a WNEW Prisoner of Rock. Now they're looking to break out.

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FAVORITE SINGLES (PICK THREE - 45's, 7" singles, & E.P.'s qualify)

FAVORITE ALBUMS (PICK THREE)

PERSON OF THE YEAR - Who did the most for our scene in 1982?

BUMMER OF THE YEAR

Mail to: Jersey Beat - 418 Gregory Ave. - Weehawken, NJ 07087

Entry deadline: November 15, 1982